

INCREASING ACCESS TO LOCALLY PRODUCED FOOD

Best Practices in Farmers Market Incentive Programs & Recommendations for Local Implementation

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SFPB RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL, APRIL 2012

- Create a citywide outreach campaign to increase SNAP enrollment, led by a bilingual public official
- Explore funding options to increase the value of SNAP dollars spent locally at farmers markets and other retailers of fresh produce
- Ask city staff to implement an effective outreach and assistance effort to increase participation in SNAP and expand SNAP benefits at local farmers markets



CONTEXT: IMAGINE AUSTIN & THE EIA

- **Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan**
 - Goal of creating “complete communities” where all residents have access to a variety of essential services and resources within their community, including healthy food
- **The Economic Impact of Austin’s Food Sector (TXP)**
 - Investment in local agriculture is a source of economic growth in Austin: every \$10 spent yields more than \$8 in additional economic activity
 - Finding #6: In spite of Austin’s bounty, issues related to hunger and food access remain.



NEXUS: LOCAL FOOD & NUTRITION ASSISTANCE



Photo Credit: Sustainable Food Center

Research Goal

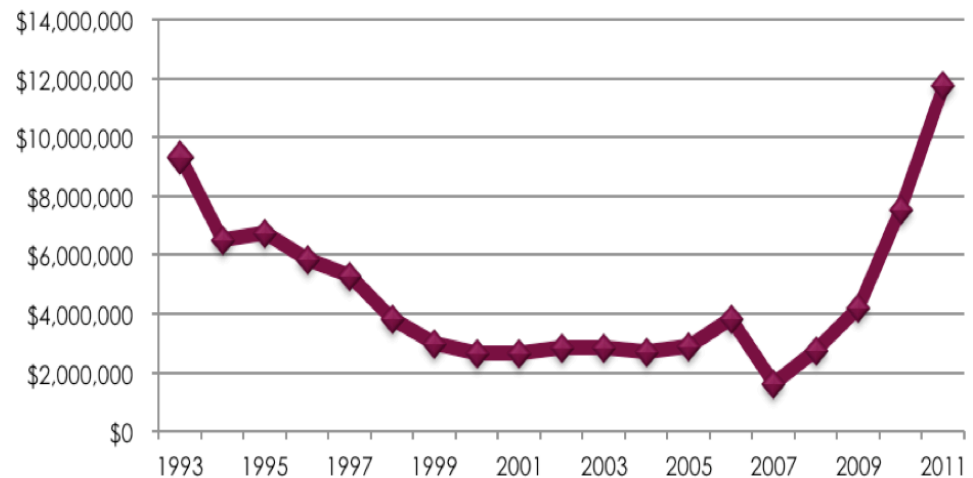
Explore farmers market incentive programs as vehicles for **increasing access** to healthy food for food-insecure consumers while also channeling dollars into the **local food economy**



FARMERS MARKET INCENTIVE PROGRAMS (FMIP)

- Increases **availability** and **affordability** of healthy, locally-sourced foods for nutrition assistance beneficiaries
- SNAP multiplier effect (\$1.79) benefits the local food economy
- **Survey findings:**
FMIPs increased SNAP redemption, incentive redemption, and SNAP customer visits every year, per-market and per-farmer.

National SNAP Redemption at Farmers Markets & Farm Stands



LOCALLY: THE SUSTAINABLE FOOD CENTER'S DOUBLE DOLLAR INCENTIVE PROGRAM (DDIP)



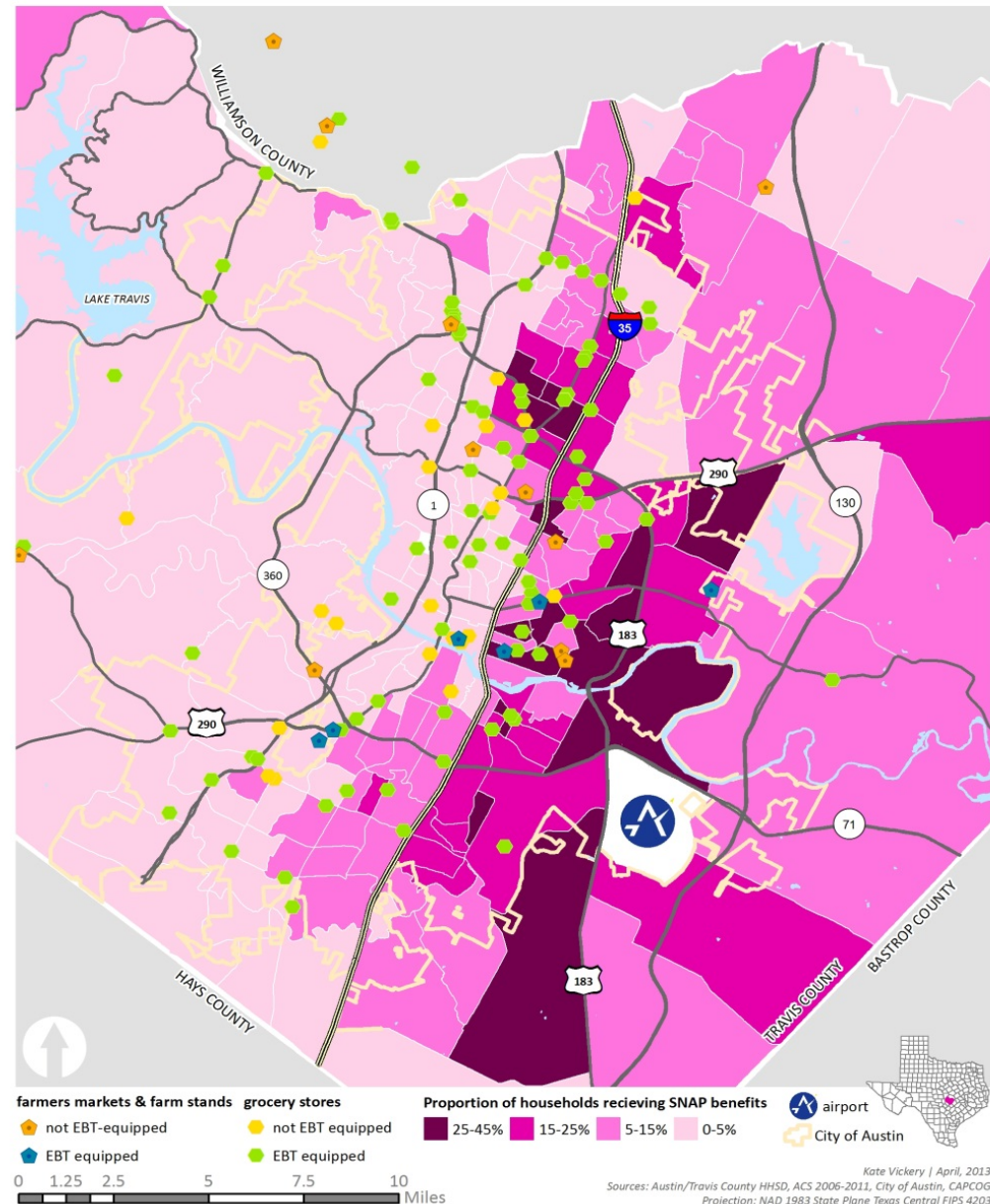
Photo Credit: Jen Reel, *Texas Observer*

- Began in 2012
- Operates at two farmers markets (Sunset Valley and East)
- \$2:\$1 coupon value
- Privately funded through St. David's Foundation and others
- Strong infrastructure ready to scale up



THE LANDSCAPE OF SNAP ENROLLMENT AND EBT

- SNAP **enrollment** is concentrated in the eastern half of Austin and Travis County
- Lack of traditional food retailers and retailers that source local foods in areas with high SNAP enrollment
- Only **six of 17** farmers markets and farm stands are EBT equipped



RECOMMENDATIONS:

SCALE UP CAPACITY OF CURRENT AND NEW FMIPs

- **Increase** EBT availability at local food retail locations, especially at farmers markets and farm stands. Consider making **EBT mandatory** for all farmers markets and farm stands.
 - Only 6 of Austin's 17 farmers markets and farm stands accept EBT.
- **Expand** farmers market incentive programming to all Austin farmers markets and farm stands within the next two years.
 - As funding for FMIPs increases, program participation increases.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

FMIP COORDINATION AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

- Administer Austin's farmers market incentive program through a single nonprofit **umbrella organization**.
 - Responsible for fundraising and administration functions of FMIP
- Establish a **single point of contact** at the City of Austin or Travis County to provide SNAP administration assistance to farmers markets and the FMIP umbrella organization.
 - This individual will serve as a resource to markets on SNAP-related issues, including EBT, and as a liaison to local and state stakeholders.
- Provide EBT training and **technical support** to farmers markets.
 - Develop resources for EBT use and maintenance, and determine who is responsible for technical assistance.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

STABILIZE AND INCREASE FMIP FUNDING

- Provide funding for FMIPs at Austin farmers markets on a **multi-year** basis from **diverse** sources, including the City.
 - Longer-term funding carries a lower administrative burden, and the City's investment in FMIPs would promote program sustainability.
- Provide funding for both FMIP **administrative** costs as well as the cost of the financial **incentive** to be provided to nutrition assistance customers.
 - Administrative costs typically account for more than 50% of the initial cost of FMIPs. This cost decreases over time.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

IMPROVE OUTREACH THROUGH KEY PARTNERSHIPS

- Advertise the FMIP through other **public and private programs** that reach SNAP participants.
 - When appropriate, information about Austin's FMIP should be included in SNAP-related outreach provided by city and state agencies and nonprofit organizations.
 - The umbrella organization and city/county point of contact can help facilitate this collaboration.



NEXT STEPS FOR THE CITY OF AUSTIN

- The City of Austin has the potential to be a key source of steady funding and support for FMIPs.
- We recommend that **\$50,000 – \$75,000** be allocated in the FY 2014 budget cycle to support these programs.
- Potential complementary approaches to delivering incentive programs for SNAP recipients:
 - Traditional grocery stores
 - Mobile vending
 - Community-based farm stands

